politics with the security of the American people, we refused to take the bait.

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At that time, Republicans announced that they intended to offer a motion to recommit the bill that had no substantive base, was already addressed in the bill and in current law, and was designed to delay consideration of this important intelligence tool. Their reasoning was disingenuous; their motives were absolutely political. As a result, Democrats refused to partake in their game of political theater.

If the House does not pass this bill today because of Republican obstructionism, then it will be abundantly clear that the minority and the administration are willing to put politics in front of the safety of the American people. We are back today, and we will continue to come back to the House floor, however many times it takes, to give our men and women in the intelligence community the tools that they need to do their jobs and keep America safe, while also preserving our civil liberties. This is a balance that is not only difficult but absolutely critical.

I urge my colleagues to vote ''yes'' on the rule and ''yes'' on the underlying legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. I thank the gentleman and my namesake from Florida (Mr. HASTINGS) for yielding me the customary 30 minutes, and I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

(Mr. HASTINGS of Washington asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Rules Committee held a second hearing to consider a second rule to provide for consideration of H.R. 3773, the Responsible Electronic Surveillance That is Overseen, Reviewed, and Effective, or the RESTORE Act. As you may recall, a month ago the House considered and approved a closed rule for the RESTORE Act. Not only was it a closed rule, prohibiting any debate on amendments, but it also denied Members the opportunity to cast a separate vote on a manager's amendment and changes to the amendment which became part of the base bill once the rule was adopted.

Mr. Speaker, here we go again. The result a month ago was that the Democrat majority recognized the RESTORE Act was insufficient and decided to pull the bill from the House floor without a vote. Rather than spending a month working in a bipartisan manner to strengthen the bill, yesterday the Democrat-controlled Rules Committee was at it again, rewriting and denying Republican Members the chance to even offer input or suggestions and prohibiting every single Member of the House from offering amendments and alternatives. The

Democrat majority's take-it-or-leave-it strategy on this bill is dangerous and is destined to fail, Mr. Speaker. It will not close our Nation's intelligence gap. In fact, it could widen it.

In 1978, Congress enacted the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, or FISA, to establish a procedure for electronic surveillance of international communications. As enacted into law, FISA had two principles: first, to protect the civil liberties of Americans by requiring the government to first obtain a court order before collecting electronic intelligence on U.S. citizens in our country; second, the law specified how intelligence officials working to perfect our national security could collect information on foreign persons in foreign places without having to get a warrant.

The intent of the original FISA law was to enhance American security, while at the same time protecting American privacy. Recognizing that no responsibility of the Federal Government is more important than providing for the defense and security of the American people, Congress should be doing all it can to ensure that FISA continues to reflect the intent of the original law.

In August, Congress, in a bipartisan manner, took an important step forward to close our Nation's intelligence gap. The Protect America Act passed only after repeated attempts by Republicans to give our Nation's intelligence professionals the tools and the authority they needed to protect our homeland. This action was long overdue, and this law marked a significant step forward in improving our national security. The Democrats forced the security tools that we passed in August to expire after 6 months.

Now Congress must act again to renew this law by early next year before the Democrat expiration date arrives and our national security once again will be at serious risk. Unfortunately, the legislation before us today does not provide the security we need to protect our Nation from a potential future terrorist attack. It is a retreat, Mr. Speaker, from a law enacted in August, and jeopardizes the safety and security of Americans from foreign terrorist threats.

I am concerned that not only were final changes to the bill given to the minority just yesterday afternoon, but it was stated in our hearing that the Democrat chairman of the Judiciary Committee got the revised text just moments before we did. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Mr. CONYERS' willingness expressed in his testimony before the Rules Committee to work with Republicans and perhaps even postpone consideration of a rule until the bill could be properly reviewed and Republicans had a chance to offer a substitute or changes to the bill. Sadly, the chairwoman of the Rules Committee overruled Mr. CONYERS and expressed her intention to move this bill without any alternatives, amend-

ments, or possible improvements being considered.

The action of the Rules Committee in October and again yesterday to completely shut down the legislative process shatters the promises made by Democrat leaders a year ago. The distinguished chairwoman of the Rules Committee on December 27, 2006, was quoted in the New York Times, Mr. Speaker: ''We are going to give people an honest and contemplative body they can be proud of once more. We are going to have a much more open process.''

House Majority Leader HOYER, on December 5, 2006, was quoted in Congress Daily PM as saying, Mr. Speaker: ''We intend to have a Rules Committee that gives opposition voices and alternative proposals an ability to be heard and considered on the floor of the House.''

Mr. Speaker, actions obviously speak louder than words. The modernization of foreign intelligence surveillance into the 21st century is a critical national security priority. It is alarming that the Democrat majority wants to move full speed ahead on a bill that weakens Americans' privacy protections, while at the same time strengthening protections for our enemies in the war on terror. I must therefore urge my colleagues to vote against this closed rule so that we can make absolutely certain that we are making our laws more, not less, effective in our constant battle to prevent a future terrorist attack against our Nation.

If this rule is adopted, Members will only have the choice to vote for or against a seriously flawed bill that threatens, not strengthens, our national security. The Democrat take-it-or-leave-it strategy shuts down all voices from being heard, and ultimately every American can suffer the consequences if this bill and the rule are adopted.

Enacting the Protect Act last August, which was a major accomplishment of this Congress, which has chosen to spend, frankly, more time debating and enacting legislation naming post offices and Federal buildings than real policy, it is ironic that the Democrat majority now wants to pull the rug out from under this successful accomplishment.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote against this closed rule.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentlewoman from California (Ms. MATSUI), my colleague and good friend from the Rules Committee.

Ms. MATSUI. I thank the gentleman from Florida for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, liberty and security are not mutually exclusive. Reliable intelligence is crucial for the defense of our Nation. Without it, we would not be safe. At the same time, civil liberties are a vital part of our national identity. Without them, we would not be free.